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SUBJECT: USAID/FFP DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S TRIP TO DARFUR

REF: KHARTOUM 746

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Summary

¶1. From June 20-24, a USAID team comprising the visiting Deputy Director of the Office of Food For Peace (FFP), Washington and Sudan-based FFP Officers and a USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) Field Officer visited Darfur to meet with officials from the UN World Food Program (WFP) and other agencies, and to monitor food aid programs in South and West Darfur.

¶2. Key conclusions/recommendations of the team include: (1) The loss of partners has forced WFP to undertake distribution themselves in many areas themselves or use partners with limited capability. This has resulted in some programs that do not meet international (including WFP's own) standards of program quality. Within Darfur, WFP should prioritize its efforts to build adequate implementing capacity, and the USG should continue to engage the government on facilitating expansion of existing partners and expediting the arrival of "new" NGOs, to help fill food assistance gaps. (2) WFP has made significant progress in expanding its food security monitoring and analysis systems and should continue to expand and refine these capabilities. (3) Despite being the agency with the deepest field presence, WFP cannot handle the policy, coordination and programmatic issues of population returns in the absence of a coordinated framework and way forward among UN Agencies, the Government of Sudan (GOS), donors, and other interested parties. The US and other donors should reinvigorate discussions with the UN and GOS to achieve a practical way forward on return policy that is consistent with international laws, standards and agreements and which outlines the conditions of international support for returns. End summary.

South Darfur

¶3. The USAID team visited South Darfur from June 21-23, meeting with state government officials in Nyala, including the Deputy Governor (Wali) and HAC Commissioner; the WFP South Darfur Area Office; and the UN and NGO Inter-agency Management Group (IAMG). The team visited the WFP warehouse in Nyala - their largest in Sudan - and traveled by helicopter to Gereida on June 22 and to Kalma internally displaced persons (IDP) camp on June 23.

¶4. The Deputy Wali and HAC Commissioner thanked USAID for its support to WFP and noted the continued importance of the food-aid program in South Darfur. The Deputy Wali appealed for greater support for agricultural supplies, and argued that stability in South Darfur would allow more people to return to their villages. The FFP Deputy Director thanked the Deputy Wali for his hospitality and support. On the subject of returns, the FFP Deputy Director noted that USAID supports returns of displaced persons to their homes around the world but, in most places, looks to international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) or the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to certify that the returns are voluntary. Further, the FFP Deputy Director noted that USAID holds WFP to high standards of program quality and accountability. He asked the Deputy Wali to help ensure that WFP can select capable non-governmental organization (NGO) implementing partners to manage food-aid distributions. The Deputy Wali thanked the team for the points, noting that he would take them under consideration, including the issue of IOM and UNHCR, which the Wali noted was tabled during the recent High-Level Committee mission.

¶5. The WFP/South Darfur office briefed on its program, the largest of the three Darfur states with a maximum caseload of 1.3 million during the hunger gap. The main challenges highlighted by WFP/South Darfur centered around the loss of NGO implementing partners following the March 4 and 5 expulsions. CARE and Solidarites in particular covered a significant portion of the South Darfur caseload, including the Gereida IDP camp and hard-to-reach hotspots, such as Muhajeria. According to WFP/South Darfur staff, reduced implementing partner capacity has complicated WFP's ability to verify population movements and accurately register new IDPs, setback WFP's plans to conduct blanket supplementary feeding in key locations in South Darfur, and highlighted many deficiencies with

delivery systems, including the use of local relief committees.

¶16. In terms of filling gaps created by the expulsions, WFP has yet to find adequate NGO distribution partners in many parts of South Darfur, including Gereida and Kass. However, WFP has met with an advance team from CARE/Switzerland to discuss the capacity of the new organization to assume responsibility for the work of expelled NGO CARE/US. WFP also is discussing significantly expanding the operations of one existing national agency, the Sudanese Popular Committee on Relief (SPCR), including significant capacity building and training to ensure that SPCR meets WFP's technical standards. In addition, WFP noted its concern regarding IDP returns, particularly as IOM has been barred from working in South Darfur. [Note: GOS restrictions on IOM operations are in contradiction to the MOUs signed by the GOS in 2004 and 2006. End note.]

¶17. On June 23, the team traveled by helicopter to Gereida, which hosts the largest IDP camp in Darfur with an estimated population of 135,000. WFP assumed direct responsibility for food distributions from CARE following the expulsions in March. Humanitarian programs - particularly food aid - have had a tumultuous history in Gereida due to the frequent changes in implementing partners. Before CARE, under the ICRC system, IDPs were registered but did not receive the standard ration cards that WFP usually provides. CARE had not yet begun to issue the cards before the organization's expulsion. Without the cards, WFP is having difficulty avoiding beneficiary exclusion or inclusion errors - namely, ensuring both that all those eligible for food aid receive it, and that only intended beneficiaries are recipients. These problems were admitted freely by WFP and readily visible to the USAID team visiting the camp.

¶18. WFP staff in Gereida noted that they are working to upgrade the Gereida operation into an official sub-office within its management structure, rationalize the registration lists, and convert the distribution system to one that relies on household ration cards, thereby ensuring appropriate targeting. These changes will help address both inclusion and exclusion errors, and also assist with building the capacity of the Food Relief Committees (FRCs) in the camp.

¶19. On the final day in South Darfur, the team visited Kalma IDP Camp just outside of Nyala town. Most NGOs working in Kalma camp were expelled on March 4. The GOS has allowed only one new NGO - USAID/OFDA partner American Refugee Committee - to fill water, sanitation, and hygiene gaps in the camp beginning on June 22. Two other USAID/OFDA partners continue to await permission from state-level officials to begin activities in Kalma (reftel). While in Kalma, the team toured nutrition activities being undertaken by former Action Contre la Faim (ACF) local staff, now supported directly by UNICEF. The team observed that the nutrition services are continuing to run efficiently, utilizing supplies that were saved from the stocks of expelled NGOs. As a stopgap measure, the team was impressed with the ability of the staff to continue operations in the center. Without any direct program management, however, the team remains skeptical of the continued feasibility of this program, particularly once supplies begin to dwindle.

West Darfur

¶10. From June 23-24, the USAID Team traveled to El Geneina, West Darfur, and held meetings with the Wali of West Darfur and the WFP West Darfur Area Office. WFP briefed the team on its programs in West Darfur, including the short-term measures WFP has put in place to cover the gaps of expelled NGO partners, which comprised 70 percent of the caseload for the state. The team also visited two IDP camps located in El Geneina town - Abu Zar and Riyad.

¶11. The Wali of West Darfur thanked the team for visiting his state and conveyed appreciation for WFP's excellent performance in the wake of the March NGO expulsions. Noting that the security situation in West Darfur "is stable," and that there is a "high degree of cooperation between state agencies and the humanitarian community," the Wali asked that WFP's budget be expanded so that it can engage in sectors other than direct delivery of food aid, including returnee support, education, and the provision of agricultural inputs. The WFP Deputy Director asked the Wali to assist WFP in four areas: 1) ensuring that WFP has adequate partners to undertake distributions; 2) coordinating early with WFP

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on returns to ensure that they are voluntary and sustainable; 3) ensuring that WFP can undertake headcounts to accurately determine the caseload; and 4) ensuring that assets are returned to WFP partners when/if they return under affiliate names so that programs can quickly resume. The Wali thanked the team for this information, and noted that all of the assets from expelled NGOs are "in the safe hands of the state," and will be handed back to NGOs when they return.

¶12. WFP provided a detailed briefing on the last round of data collection and analysis from its new Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS). The FSMS is housed in WFP and jointly implemented under a tripartite agreement with FAO and the State Ministry of Agriculture in West Darfur. The purpose of the FSMS is to provide WFP and its partners a more substantive analysis of the food security situation in areas of ongoing WFP programs. WFP expects the FSMS to provide a more nuanced understanding of the impact of food aid on populations, allowing WFP to make more regular, informed programmatic decisions regarding food aid modalities/activities, timing, and duration of interventions. WFP provided examples of how FSMS analytical tools have influenced programming decisions, including an adjustment in the duration of its seasonal support activity from five to four months during the hunger gap.

¶13. WFP also briefed the team on its priorities for 2009 and 2010, noting that its central focus now is to improve the quality of general food distributions. [Note: More than 80 percent of WFP's programming in Darfur is general food rations provided to IDPs. End

note.] As in South Darfur, WFP has assumed direct responsibility for conducting food distributions in some critical areas, most notably in Zalingei and Mornei, following the NGO expulsions. WFP has also expanded its agreement with the Sudanese Red Crescent (SRC) to cover food aid distributions in the large Geneina town camps.

Conclusions

¶14. The team concluded that:

- a. WFP has drawn on its strong logistics operations to distribute food to most beneficiaries during the past two months despite the expulsion of four of their primary NGO implementing partners.
- b. The loss of partners has forced WFP to undertake distribution in many areas themselves or use partners with limited capability, resulting in some programs that do not meet international (including WFP's own) standards of program quality.
- c. WFP's increased involvement in direct distribution has revealed weaknesses, as noted by WFP and observed by the USAID team, in NGO-managed programs prior to March 4, which WFP is now trying to address within new and existing NGO agreements and with the aid of the new FSMS.
- d. WFP has made significant progress in expanding its food security monitoring and analysis capabilities but is only in the early stages of implementation. WFP will not be able to take full advantage of the information without integrating its data with data from other agencies. The NGO expulsions have delayed the full rollout of the FSMS, and WFP is now relying more on state line ministries for data collection.
- e. As the agency with the deepest field presence, WFP is on the frontlines of the issue of returns, having been called upon first by the GOS to provide assistance. But it cannot address the policy, coordination and most programmatic aspects of the issue on its own, without other UN Agencies, donors, and others parties having a coordinated policy framework; IOM and UNHCR certifying returns are voluntary; and all UN agencies and NGOs providing programmatic support.

Recommendations

¶15. Based on the visit, the team recommends the following:

- a. Within Darfur, WFP should prioritize its efforts to build adequate implementing capacity. This includes both building the

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capacities of NGO partners to meet basic standards of assessment, targeting, and monitoring, as well as augmenting WFP operational staff to provide these functions where adequate NGO capacity does not exist. As WFP formulates its 2010 operation, efforts to expand WFP programming into other activities should not come at the expense of WFP's core emergency programming in Darfur.

- b. The USG should continue to engage the government on facilitating expansion of existing partners, and the arrival of "new" NGOs, to help fill food assistance gaps. In this regard, it must be ensured that WFP be given sufficient latitude by the GOS to choose implementing partners on the basis of technical capacities.

- c. WFP should continue to expand and refine the FSMS by integrating data collection into the field-level agreements with implementing NGOs and integrating food security data with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) nutrition database.

- d. The US and other donors should reinvigorate discussions with the UN and GOS to achieve a clear and practical way forward on returns policy and the conditions of international support for return.

The FFP Deputy Director has cleared this message.

WHITEHEAD